MONTEREY NEWS

January 2008
VOLUME XXXVIII · Number 1

The Town

The News still does not have a town reporter, so once again this month the editor compiled this report from the Select Board meeting minutes recorded by Inter-Departmental Secretary Melissa Noe and approved by the Select Board. (Section headings are the editor's.) The meetings of November 26, December 3, and December 10 are covered in this report. There was no meeting on December 24, and the minutes of the December 17 meeting were not approved and made public in time for this issue. Anyone interested in being town reporter should contact the editor.

Town Clerk Office Issue

The Select Board formally decided to have Town Counsel Jeremia Pollard specify the parameters for opening an investigation into the Town Clerk's office. At the December 3rd meeting, Pollard reported the following:

• Proceeding under Chapter 41, the Select Board can open an investigation to consider the discipline or dismissal of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual. The Board is not required to hold the investigations in an executive session and the person being investigated cannot demand that it be held in executive session (he or she can, however, request it be public if the Board has announced it as an executive session).

• Section 23B does not tell you how to formulate the report but does state that if an investigation is opened the results must be published in a report that is printed in the Town Report. This would be an investigation of a department, not

Monterey veterans and friends gathered at the Meetinghouse on November 11th to observe Veterans Day. The church bell was rung 11 times at 11 a.m.

a person; if a person in the department is singled out the executive session process is used to hear complaints brought against a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual. Evidence collected in an investigation could be used if the town were to start the process of removal, which currently is not the objective.

• The Select Board writes the report. The investigation into someone's professional acts would be protected under the legislative function and the Board would be immune to any liability issues. The most cautious road would involve subpoenaing witnesses and holding the investigation/ interviews in executive session. The person being investigated would need to be notified about each executive session and would have the option to attend or not.

• Town Counsel will work on the form for summons and the Select Board will come up with a list of those to be subpoenaed. These would normally be delivered by the Berkshire County Sheriff's office and if the person does not appear it would be a contempt issue. Town Counsel will research whether the summons can be delivered by the Town Constable instead. Town Counsel could be present to advise the Select Board but the Select Board would run the meeting.

• Changing an elected position to an appointed position would require a Town Meeting vote and would require it be a ballot question.

On December 10th, the Select Board decided that the basis for opening the investigation would be for the Select Board to investigate complaints received regarding the Town Clerk's office. The Board decided that in all fairness, for the purpose of this investigation all town boards would be asked to come in. After a discussion about whether or not witnesses would be subpoenaed and how to handle the interview process, the Select Board agreed that Town Counsel will be present for all interviews, which will be held in Executive Session, and that the town boards to be interviewed will be sent a letter with a couple of Monday options and a letter of explanation about the investigation. A draft letter was written, which will be sent to Town Counsel to review.

Broadband Committee

The members of the Broadband Committee met with the Select Board on December 3rd to discuss progress and plans. Adam Goodman resigned from the committee due to a conflict of interest with his business. Virgil Stucker also resigned because of too many other commitments. That leaves the committee with only five members and more are needed; anyone who would like to be on it should contact the Broadband Committee via email (broadbandcommittee@verizon.net).

The committee is in touch with Berkshire Connect, a group trying to get high-speed internet access for all Western Massachusetts residents. Berkshire Connect has prepared a survey questionnaire to determine how many Berkshire residents have and do not have access to high-speed service, a necessary first step to future planning. The Monterey Broadband Committee is trying to mail these questionnaires to all Monterey households; the Select Board approved the use of the Transfer Station sticker mailing list for this purpose. All residents, even those who already have DSL service, are strongly encouraged to respond to the questionnaire, since this will provide vital information for Berkshire Connect and the committee. See related article, p. 7.)

Committee members have also met with surrounding towns about their attempts at obtaining high-speed access.

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DSL service or the reasons for the lack thereof should contact Brian Morin at the local Verizon office in Great Barrington (528-9926).

The Boat Ramp Issue

The Select Board heard informally that the Thorns would be willing to negotiate with the town about possibly selling a parcel of their land for public boat access on Lake Garfield once the town clarified that the Thorns were not liable for contamination of a neighbor's well. On November 26th, the Board met with Peter Kolodziej, Health Agent for the Town of Monterey, who informed them that the Board of Health has no jurisdiction over matters between private property owners and will take no action. The Select Board decided to send a letter to the Thorn's stating that the Town has no jurisdiction and considers the matter closed.

On December 3, the Board reviewed the following response from the Thorns to an earlier letter from the Board regarding the possible purchase: "This letter is the official response of the owners of Bracken Brae Farm, 495 Main Rd, Monterey, MA, Thomas B Thorn, et al, to your letter dated August 27, 2007. We have discussed the consideration of selling to the town a parcel of our westerly acreage fronting Lake Garfield, for the purposes of the town building a public boat ramp and parking lot. We are declining your offer, but with thanks for the consideration. Because this offer was unsolicited, we feel giving reason for this refusal is unnecessary." Signed by Elizabeth Thorn.

School Budget Assessment Issue

The Select Board began looking at the Regional Agreement for Southern Berkshire and made notations of amendments they'd like to make regarding the agreement's method of allocating capital costs. Bob Gauthier came in to discuss the Regional School Agreement with the Board from his perspective as a retired teacher at Mt. Everett.

On December 10th, the Board wrote a letter of intention to the Southern Berkshire Regional School District, which was reviewed and approved during the meeting by Dan Moriarity, Chair of the Finance Committee. They also discussed a public meeting with the state Department of Education scheduled for December 10th and a letter from the DOE regarding the official takeover of the school budget.

The Board needs more information on possibly changing the school committee members to elected positions.

Police Blotter

Police Chief Gareth Backhaus reported the following police responses:

• Domestic disturbance call to Great Barrington side of Beartown State Forest, resulting in the operator of motor vehicle being arrested for operating under the influence.

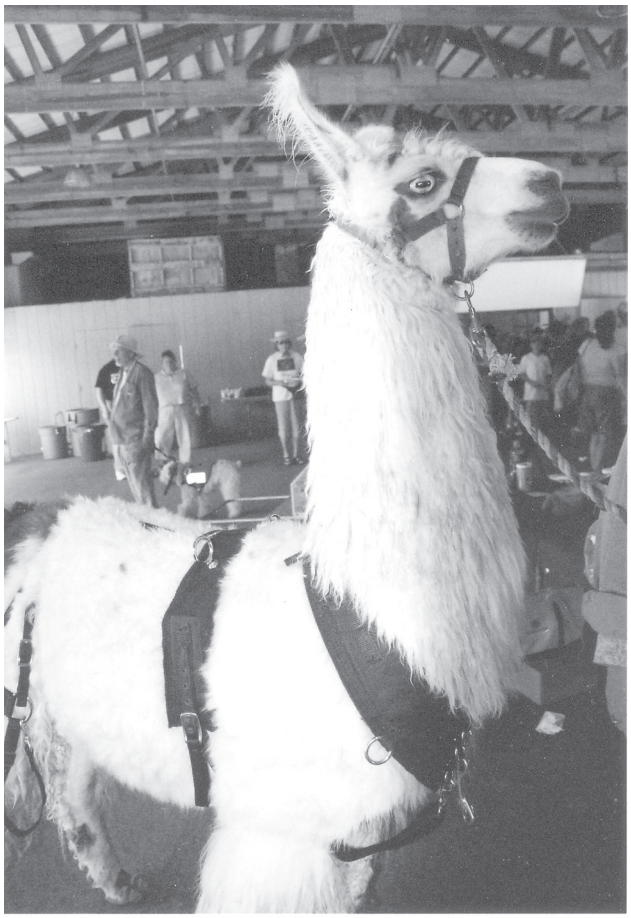
• Call from Blue Hill Road about three coyotes dragging a deer across the road; the animals were gone when the officer arrived.

• A summons was served.

• Abandoned 911 call on Cronk Rd.

• Officer called to assist in disturbance at the Transfer Station.

• A found dog at the General Store and a loose dog on Art School Road were picked up by the officer on duty and turned over to the Animal Control Officer.



Jean Germain

One of the September Monterey Day celebrants.

• Lockout on Beartown Mountain Road.

• Complaint that someone was taking water out of Lake Buel with a large truck.

• Tree across Main Road.

• Assisted Fire Department on Hupi Road.

• Several calls from a resident on Art School Road about a transformer that is

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humming and keeping them awake. The resident threatened to call the Police Department every night until it was solved and said that DEP has also been contacted. Backhaus spoke with National Grid and was told that as soon as the complaint came in the transformer was changed and put on a rubber pad; the resident doesn't believe this. National Grid has turned it over to their legal department. The residents also called the State Police who turned it back over to the local authorities to handle.

- Accident in front of Post Office.
- False alarm on Woodland Drive.
- Mutual aid call in Egremont.
- 911 hang-up on Mount Hunger Road
- Transformer fire on Chestnut Hill.
- Complaint of gunshots on Steven's Lake.

Backhaus also reported that the brakes on the cruiser (a 2005 that was purchased in 2004 and has 100,000 miles on it) had to be repaired and that it has a transmission problem. A rebuild with a six-month warranty will cost $1600 or a rebuilt transmission from Ford can be purchased for $3000 with a three-year warranty. The Police Department is scheduled to purchase a new cruiser in 2008 (the purchase was postponed last year). The Board agreed that purchasing the $1600 rebuild with the six-month warranty was the best option.

Backhaus asked for the names of the residents who haven't paid their false alarm fines and will follow up personally about why the fines have not been paid.

Highways and Operations

Director of Operations Maynard Forbes informed the Board that the town has received more money from the state for the flood in 2005 (for Tyringham Road); the money will go into free cash at the end of this year.

The Board is going to write another letter to Representative Smitty Pignatelli and Senator Ben Downing about financial aid for the proposed salt shed once Forbes gives the Board an update.

A hydraulic line blew on the 2005 550 truck, which in turn caused the pump to blow.

This and That

The Select Board was updated on the Inn at Art School Road, which the town has heard is operating as a Bed and Breakfast without a permit. Town Counsel Pollard is conflicted out of the case due to a previous consultation two years ago with the parties involved. The town either has to retain outside counsel or the Building Commissioner and Health Agent can proceed on their own for a show cause. Building Commissioner Don Torrico felt that he and Peter Kolodziej would be able to go forward without legal representation.

Torrico also asked the Boards permission to file a criminal complaint against individuals who performed illegal work while a stop-work order was in effect. Since this process would involve Town Counsel, Torrico cannot use the town's resources without first receiving permission from the Select Board; he can proceed on the CMR side by filing complaints against individuals through the Building Code/Statute process. The Select Board approved using Town Counsel if necessary.

The Select Board voted unanimously to approve the Monterey General Store's alcoholic beverages license renewal. The paperwork will be sent to the ABCC.

Mick Garrold of MIIA came in to discuss the town's current insurance status and the medical plan options that are available. No major changes to Monterey's coverages and costs are anticipated.

The Board received a letter from Janet Cathcart giving notice that she is resigning from her elected seat on the Monterey Planning Board as of December 14, 2007.

The Board discussed having Verizon install a pay phone at the Lake Buel boat

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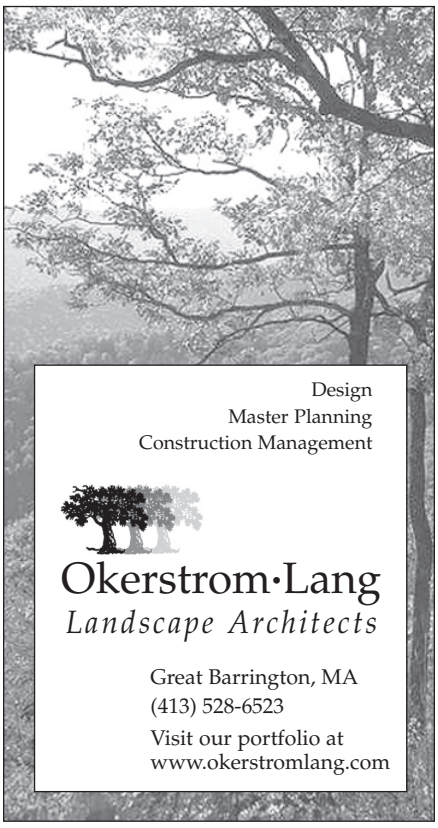

ramp for safety reasons. Police Chief Gareth Backhaus said that the Board would first need to get permission from the Lake Buel Access Board and that he will provide the Board with the contact information.

The Board reviewed the Bally Gally lease agreement. (Bally Gally is the second house on the Wilson McLaughlin property.) The tenants would like to have a one-year agreement with an option for a second year. The Board agreed that the lease should continue to have a one-year term. Tim Lovett, who wrote the first Bally Gally lease agreement for the town, was asked about a renewed lease agreement or rider. Tim sent the rental renewal text, which was reviewed and approved by the Board on December 10th.

Leroy Thorpe of the Park Commission came in to discuss the park budget and the pay phone at the town beach. The phone is costing the Parks Department $90 to $100 per month, and Verizon takes the money collected in the phone. The Park Commission wants to take the pay phone out and replace it with a landline that can only make local calls; this would be located outside and would need to be weatherproof. The Board had no objection as long as the town received the same service. They asked Thorpe to look into a call box similar to those on highways for motorist aid.

Inter-Departmental Secretary Melissa Noe gave the Board a list of the departments that have not yet turned in their town reports and asked what should be done. The Board asked her to send out another notice that individual reports not received by the end of December will not appear in the Town Report, which is to be sent to the printer in January.

Dan Moriarity of the Finance Committee came in to discuss the FY09 budget request time frame.

— Will Marsh
(from Select Board minutes)

Brush Burning Season Opens

Each year, the state allows some Massachusetts towns, including Monterey, to conduct open burning. It is important to remember that when burning, you are subject to certain requirements and responsibilities issued and enforced by the State Fire Marshals Office, DEP, and your local Fire Department. These guidelines include the following:

- Permits can be obtained from January 15 to April 30.
- You must obtain a permit for open burning from the Monterey Fire Department by calling **528-1734.**
- Residents must call on the day they will be burning; no permits are issued ahead of time. The permit is good for one day only.
- Burning hours start at 10 a.m. and all fires must be out by 4 p.m.
- Burning materials will be confined to brush only. **All other materials are prohibited.**
- Burning piles will be kept small and controllable
- No burning within 75 ft. of a building.
- Have a method of extinguishment and tools available.
- Never leave the fire unattended for any reason.
- Permits are issued weather permitting. Burning is not allowed every day.
- Don't wait until the end of April; you will be disappointed if you wait till the last minute.
- Burning season will not be extended.

Make sure you call for a permit at 528-1734 and leave your name, the address of where you are burning, and a phone number.

Hockey News

Adult, pick-up hockey games, with a soft puck and no checking, has started with games on Tuesday and Thursday nights at 7 p.m. and on Sunday at 9 a.m., weather permitting. Little experience is required. The games are casual, spontaneous, and fun. The rink has a heated room, lights, and a low cover charge—free. Helmets are required and pads are recommended even with the soft puck. The indoor rink is at the Monterey Pavilion behind the fire station. For more information, email sgraves8@yahoo.com.

From the Tax Collector's Office

The fiscal year 2008 actual Real Estate and Personal Property tax bills have been mailed. The third quarter tax payment is due February 1, 2008. Taxpayers may pay both the third and fourth quarters at this time if they wish. Questions regarding assessments and abatements should be addressed to the office of the Board of Assessors at 413-528-1443 x115. Abatement applications are also due in the Assessor's Office on February 1, 2008.

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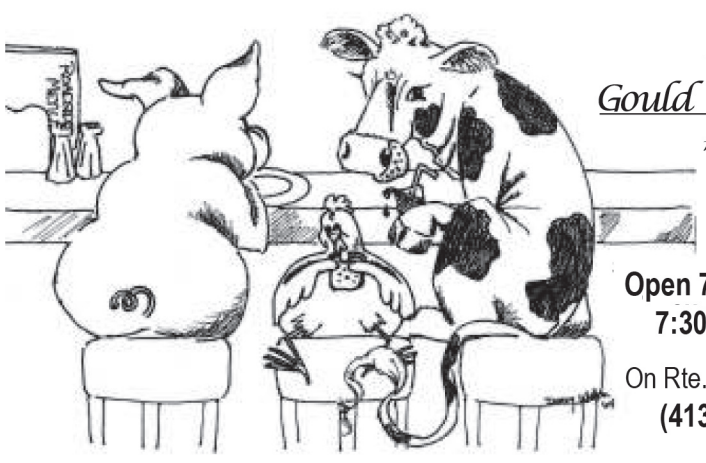

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Board of Assessors News

The Much Dreaded Revaluation

Fair and equitable real estate taxation depends upon a completely uniform and consistent way of assessing property values. The operative words here are ***uniform and consistent***—the same policies and standards of quality or desirability must be applied uniformly to all properties. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts places a second requirement on the process by mandating that the real estate assessment be at the full fair market value, not at some fraction of it, as is allowed elsewhere. To ensure that the databases on properties are accurate and up-to-date, Massachusetts also requires the assessors to examine a different one-third of all properties (usually a drive-by or exterior review) each year so that by the end of the third year all properties have had a cursory review. Finally, the commonwealth further demands that the assessment of every property in the municipality be ***revaluated*** (including sales analyses and extensive value review) every ninth year. This is the much dreaded Reval (for revaluation) process, and this year, 2008, is Monterey's Reval year.

The Reval process is painful, but very necessary. It purges many errors from our database and introduces much new data to it. It also provides a time to reexamine each assessment and verify that our standards and practices have been consistently applied across all of Monterey real estate. Last year (2007) the Board of Assessors completed its review and updating of the Land Assessment process (see our website and the July 2007 *Monterey News*). Now, in conjunction with the Reval process, we're revising and adjusting a second part of the assessment process—the Dwelling Assessment—and we will be writing each property owner for his/her help. By the end of 2008, we hope to have examined the ***interior*** of every Monterey dwelling and to reconcile our new observations with the data already recorded for those dwellings in our database. This is no small task!

The Board uses a computer software program to manage its database and to assist in computing the assessed valuation. The program focuses the Assessors' attention on the same set of factors for all dwellings and ensures a standardized process by requiring specific information about the size and construction of the dwellings, and special features, such as the number of bathrooms and kitchens, the type of heat and air conditioning, type of flooring, number of fireplaces, and the finish grade. Using the entered data, the software calculates the assessed value of the dwelling using a standardized set of dollar values for each of its feature. Despite the uniformity of the process, errors that lead to inequitable assessments creep into the database. In our experience, the main culprits are errors in the data describing the dwelling. These arise because different generations of assessors have applied different sets of standards or the home was remodeled or additions made to it without upgrading the property card. Thus, we are now focusing on correcting and verifying the data describing the dwelling. We have decided to send each homeowner a copy of the property card for his/her home that contains our current description of his/her dwelling and to review it with the owner. Owners can then question the assessors about the property card via email or surface mail and we will respond by phone. Hopefully, many problems may be resolved in that way. We also will arrange for a walk-through inspection of each dwelling, so that we can update the property card and satisfy both the homeowner and ourselves that, now, we've got it right.

In closing, the assessors would like to point out that homeowners are under no obligation to allow us to walk though and inspect their dwelling—it is not a legal requirement. They have the right to refuse us entry onto their property and, if they do so, the assessors will do their best to arrive at a fair assessment from the available data. We ask for everyone's cooperation in this unusual undertaking because it is the best and surest way to update our database to ensure a fair and equitable assessment of all properties.

— Bob Lazzarini,
for the Board of Assessors.

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Bringing Broadband Service to Western Massachusetts

The Monterey Broadband Committee is working with broadband committees of other local towns and with Berkshire Connect and Pioneer Valley Connect to bring broadband service to all of our region. The following description of the current situation and the work of Berkshire Connect and Pioneer Valley Connect was taken from their web sites (www.bconnect.org and www.pioneervalleyconnect.org).

Berkshire Connect and Pioneer Valley Connect (the Connects) are regional development efforts with the goal of creating an advanced telecommunications landscape that will have affordable, reliable, and redundant high capacity broadband services available throughout Western Massachusetts. The purpose of greater access is to encourage economic development as well as promote improved communication systems for education, health care, and public safety.

The Connects believe that by having the private and public sector working together we will be able to reach a solution that will give households, businesses, and organizations throughout Western Massachusetts the opportunity to be part of the global information network. The effort is led by business and community leaders from Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden Counties. As part of their mission, the Connects strive to be informed of and collaborate with any project or policy that may impact broadband deployment in the region.

On October 18, 2007 Governor Patrick submitted legislation to create the Massachusetts Broadband Incentive Fund and the Massachusetts Broadband Institute. We had high hopes that the bill would be considered before the end of the Legislature's formal session just prior to Thanksgiving. That did not happen, and the bill will not be taken up until 2008. While the region awaits legislative approval of Governor Patrick's $25 million bill targeted to bring broadband infrastructure to the unserved communities of the commonwealth, the Connects are working on both short- and long-term projects to facilitate the deployment of broadband in Western Massachusetts .

The Connects, along with many legislators and community groups, have worked to draw attention to the inequity of broadband access in many areas of Western Massachusetts. One-third of the towns in this region have no broadband access, while many other communities have limited access. We recognize that there are no state or federal mandates to require broadband service. As the Connects demonstrated to the Western Massachusetts delegation in March 2006, the only path forward is a public-private partnership that would be catalyzed with public investment. The proposed mission of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute is to implement, and manage the $25 million fund, which would leverage private investment with public funds.

Our Western Massachusetts delegation has led the effort to secure funding. The Patrick Administration accelerated that effort with compelling legislation. While we have every confidence that elected officials will endorse and pass a broadband bill, we will continue pushing on many fronts as a way to connect communities now and keep the broadband issue forefront in the minds of elected officials at all levels. To that end, we have set primary objectives for the first half of 2008.

1. *Identify those homes and businesses that do not have broadband:* A community broadband survey, released on December 3rd, is designed to gather information that will identity more precisely where high speed internet service exists and, more importantly, where it does not exist. This information will be used to create mapping products that will >

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be critical when working with providers to provide service to unserved areas and will reinforce the inequity between eastern and western Massachusetts. (See article on the survey, p. 9.)

2. *Broadband to Unserved Town Halls:* Town halls need broadband *now* for required electronic reporting to state agencies. Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications & Cable Commissioner Sharon Gillett has convened representatives of key state agencies in Boston in search of immediate solutions. This has resulted in a variety of possible solutions. The Connects' Chief Technology Officer has joined Commissioner Gillctt's ad hoc team with the goal of finding immediate, low cost solutions for town halls.

3. *Testing Wireless Radios in Hostile Conditions:* Our three Beta Test Program networks for wireless radios in Florida, New Salem, and Worthington are all up and running. Community sessions and technical assistance are helping people connect to the networks and to extend the range of these WiFi networks. The beta test projects not only provide broadband to residents and businesses in these communities, but also provide information about whether these radio technologies can work reliably and affordably in our rural communities for short-term implementation and potentially as a component of a long-term solution.

4. *Online Forum:* The Connects recognize the benefits of sharing ideas and discussing broadband issues. To more actively support information sharing, an online forum is being developed and will go live in early December 2007.

5. *Regional Readiness Kit:* We believe that communities need to be ready to work with the private sector firms that successfully win the opportunity to serve communities through the Massachusetts Broadband Incentive Fund. The Connects are creating a kit for local broadband groups and municipal officials to prepare their communities to work with broadband providers.

6. *Information Sessions and Western Massachusetts Broadband Forum:* We realize that municipal officials and broadband committees have questions about the Massachusetts Broadband Incentive Fund, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, and how the funding will be distributed to ensure broadband access for all. Representatives from the Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development and the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative have agreed to share their thoughts and expectations about the Institute and Fund in early 2008. Additionally, we are planning a larger, daylong Forum with the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative *and* Commissioner Gillett to more fully explore broadband issues. We are hopeful that the Forum will include representatives from the Federal Communication Commission, the Department of Telecommunications and Cable, and our state and federal legislative delegations.

7. *Outreach to Providers:* In order for the state's dollars to catalyze private investment, we need to stir the attention of broadband providers. The Connects Chief Technology Officer is holding informal discussions with prospective providers with the intention of encouraging these firms to begin forming partnerships and organizing capital in order to respond to a public bidding process.

With all of these efforts we have been working closely with state agencies and officials and our municipalities. Our day-to-day partners include the Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development, our Western Massachusetts legislative delegation, the Department of Telecommunications and Cable, the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, our federal delegation including Congressman Olver and Senator Kerry, and, of course, the many community broadband committees and grassroots efforts that exist across Western Massachusetts today.

The Connects will continue to work closely with these partners to further our mission of creating a competitive and robust telecommunications landscape in Western Massachusetts. The current bond bill legislation will help achieve this mission and is a top priority of the Connects. At this stage, patience will not be a virtue. In the meantime, we are working on a local level to get people connected *now.* We look forward to the establishment and funding of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, and are committed to the shared vision of broadband access and telecommunications excellence throughout the commonwealth.

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Broadband Survey

The Monterey Broadband Committee is in the process of mailing a broadband (high speed internet) survey to as many Monterey households and businesses as can be contacted. The short survey, which will take only a few minutes to complete, was developed by Berkshire Connect and Pioneer Valley Connect (the Connects), in partnership with the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative and other state agencies. The information collected will help the Monterey Broadband Committee and the Connects to more accurately define the unserved areas of our region and determine current broadband market potential. (See related article p. 8.)

We all agree that access to broadband is an absolute necessity, and in many areas of Monterey and other Western Massachusetts towns access is simply not available. This survey will provide important information vital for helping us get broadband for the unserved areas of our town and our region. Even if you already have broadband it is extremely important to hear from you, and you will be helping your unserved neighbors (including the editorial office of the *Monterey News,* and, hey, we're all in this together) to be able to have the same benefit. **Please respond!**

If you do not receive a survey, please contact Will Marsh (528-4347), Karen Shreefter (528-1387 or 528-6615), or Monica Webb (528-2357) of the Broadband Committee, or email us at broadbandcommittee@verizon.net. You can also fill out the survey online at www.bconnect.org or www.pioneervalleyconnect.org. The deadline for responding to the survey (only one response per household or business, though if you have a home business you should fill out one for the business and one for the household) is March 1, 2008.

We invite all to keep current with our Broadband Committee's work in trying to bring broadband to the entire town. To receive updates you can either:

• send us an email with your email address to broadbandcommittee@verizon.net, or

• sign up for broadband news. To do this, go to www.montereyma.gov, scroll to the bottom and click on Subscribe to News, and under the section "News and Notices," click on Broadband Committee.

— Will Marsh
Monterey Broadband Committee

Monterey Library Notes

We are making progress toward joining the regional network, CWMARS, and now anyone in Monterey can actually benefit for the first time. We are able to issue CWMARS cards. We will be operating on our own automation system for a short time to come, but the first step in preparation is to have our patrons get their new cards. If you already have a CWMARS card from another library such as Sheffield, Great Barrington, Lee, or Pittsfield, please stop in and we'll make sure to edit the card to include Monterey as your home library—it doesn't have to be the library you like the most or visit the most; for statistics Monterey can now be listed as we are part of the system. If you don't already have a CWMARS card, come in and get yours! You'll be able to visit all the aforementioned libraries as well as the many other member libraries of the system and check out books on the card we issued to you. Already many of the books in our collection are included in the CWMARS catalog, though we have several trainings to go before we will be fully circulating.

— Mark Makuc, Library Director

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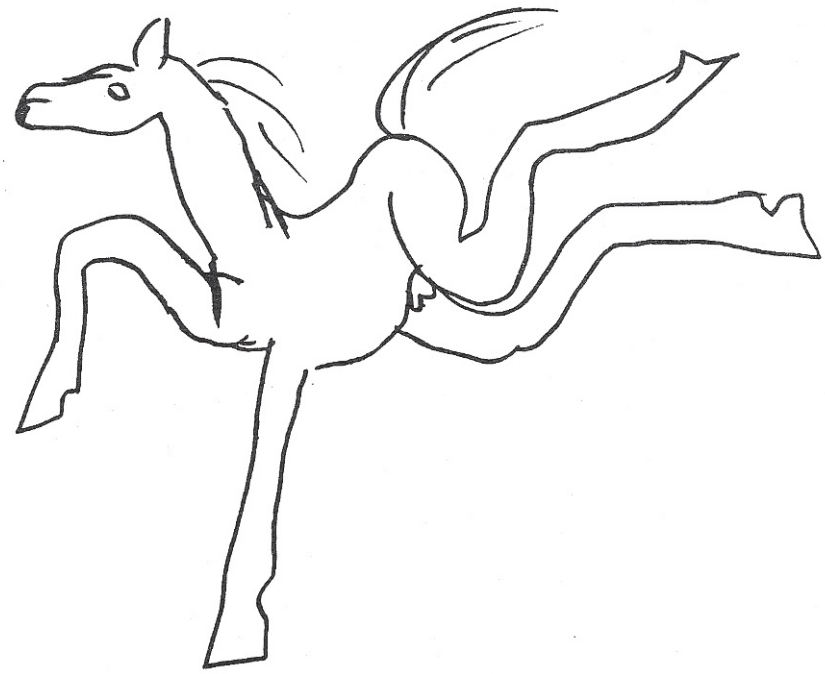
Long Winter's Rest

In New England we give agriculture a rest in the winter. The ground is frozen and the seed catalogues have barely begun. If you didn't plant it, hoe it, reap it, and stash it by now, you missed it. This year, for me, it's the Jerusalem artichokes, mostly still in the ground. Depending upon mouse population cycles and other factors, I may get a few in the spring, when they are the sweetest anyway.

All fall I was digging. Some things I was digging out and some I was digging in, such as compost. I don't always finish up the whole garden, but as much as I can get to, I like to tuck the compost in and let it freeze or rest ready to nourish the early worms. By spring I imagine this compost has turned around and is looking to the upswing of the cycle, the growth. Any compost still in the bins probably thinks of itself as decomposing, breaking down, turning to nonspecific soup and promise.

As a small farmer (I am not small, but my farm is) I work long seasonal hours which are quiet. No combine, no conveyor, no chattering field hands. It's so quiet my mind takes off a lot of the time and I get crazy enough to imagine the identity issues of the compost.

For instance, we had a lively pony. She was a bay, a Welsh pony, given to us for our horse-crazy younger daughter. The pony died recently, at the age of 36, but I had been putting her in the ground bit by bit all those years, and even after she was two months dead I was still digging her in, one wheelbarrow load at a time.



It's the manure pile, the warm living heart of the farm. When I say living, I mean it is full of worms and creatures much smaller, all of which are intimately involved with our pony and with us, headed for the carrot beds and corn patch. Those that didn't make it to the garden this year can wait. By the time spring comes and we haul them up there, they may have new identities. Many creatures of the compost pile have short life cycles, compared with people or Welsh ponies. Their atoms will already have recombined and maybe re-separated again and again by the time they make it to the root cellar in October '08, or to the table in February '09.

Where is our exquisite pony in all this? I picture her fine, pretty face, hear her morning nicker, feel that long winter coat whenever my mind wanders down the atomic trail. I see in an instant our 7-year old kid bareback in the meadow, no saddle or gear, just sitting astride in the sun with bare legs and long black braid while the pony munches and walks, moving the grass through and on up to the compost, to the beds, the root cellar, the table, the kid at suppertime.

Now it's January, the cold of a new year. All those atoms are as full of promise as ever, though the pony has vanished and the kid has grown up and moved to Boston. In the winter, the small farmer takes note.

— Bonner J. McAllester

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Sheffield Dance Finds New Venue, Jan. 26

What is a "Sheffield Dance?" For nearly thirty years the local contradance band, Mountain Laurel, has provided open-to-the-public social dancing every month at the Sheffield Grange on Route 7, just north of Sheffield Town Center. Monteruvians aged three months to eighty+ years have enjoyed dancing there these past decades. Two-thirds of the band lives in our town.

Joe Baker, known to many as a programmer and website designer, is the guitarist for the band. Joe taught and "called" dances at the Sheffield Grange for about 18 years. He was in those days a luthier, a builder of fine handmade stringed instruments including violas da gamba, violins modern and baroque, Norwegian hardanger fiddles, and even the arcane hammered dulcimer.

Now Joe still plays guitar in the band and his partner, Bonner McAllester, plays the hammered dulcimer, made by Joe of course. Bonner believes there are about eighty strings on this box, all of which need tuning all the time.

The third member of the band, Don McLean, is known to many hereabouts as the organic grower from Ancram, New York, whose strawberries draw us across the state line in June for "pick your own" at Thompson Finch Farm. Don has played fiddle with Bonner and Joe since 1983, so this band has grown up together and is tight.

The Sheffield Grange has been home to Mountain Laurel's contradances all these years, but now economic straits have put the building on the market and sent the band looking for a new venue. Fortunately, there is another hall in Sheffield to welcome the Sheffield Dance. Beginning in January, Mountain Laurel will host its dance in Dewey Memorial Hall, just down Route 7 on the west side, in the middle of Sheffield.

"We'll miss the Grange," says Bonner McAllester, interviewed recently in her home on Hupi Road at the end of a long day of tuning the pesky hammered dulcimer. "It has been home to us all these years and the atmosphere has a certain *je ne sais quoi,* which will long be remembered. But Dewey Hall is a treasure and we can't wait to be reborn there at 8:30 p.m. on January 26 with Joe calling as in the days of yore."

Contradancing is like a long line of partners doing square-dance moves. All the dances are taught and you don't need a partner to attend because unclaimed partners abound there, says McAllester. "In fact," Bonner smiles, "we have played at many a wedding over the years for couples who first met at our dances. It is so sweet."

For more information on contradancing and the Sheffield Dance, please call Bonner and Joe: 528-9385. Or just come on down to Dewey Hall on the fourth Saturday of any month except December, or June, July, August, and see for yourself.

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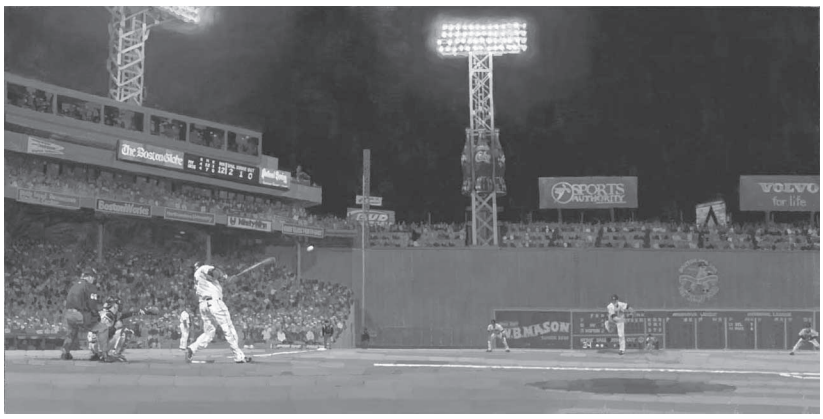

DAVID ORTIZ, 2004

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The Green Way in Monterey

Stella and John Bodner sent a tidy list of their wise green choices over the last two decades. Heres their list.

Items We've Been Using Since 1980:

1980: Started using fluorescent light bulbs.

1980: Newmac combination wood-oil furnace. (Heat primarily with wood; oil used as a backup.

1980: Daystar Domestic Hot Water Collectors. Four Panels—Ground Mounted at a 52 degree angle.

1985: Turbonic, Inc. Chill Chaser. Works off the solar hot water tank. Water to air heat exchange.

2007: Domestic Solar Hot Water Tank (new). Replaced 1980 solar hot water tank, which lasted 27 years.

2007: Two new Kohler toilets—1.28 gallon flush.

2007: Kensington Quantum 2 Windows, insulation factor R10. Replaced 18 windows.

Bravo, Bodners!

— Ellen Pearson

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Letter from College

An Individual's Holiday Perspective

What does Christmas mean, beyond the traditional religious affiliation? This is yet one more event in my life that can claim a modification thanks to my experience abroad. Certain aspects remain the same: I love the festive holiday spirit and the time spent with family and friends, I am psyched for the parties and good food, I enjoy shopping as much as many people, and even though I am not a religious person by nature I think of the Christmas Eve story as I set up our nativity scene. Over the years, those particular elements have formed the primary drive for my Christmas spirit. But in Europe the traditions and religious connection are more noticeable and the difference is palpable.

I went to Germany the last weekend in November to visit a friend from Middlebury who is studying in Mainz for the semester. It was of course wonderful to go tour more of Europe and to see a familiar face. We spent the weekend wandering around the huge local Christmas market, buying local artisans' things, and sampling goodies; thank goodness my friend was such a good translator. As we took in the festive cheerful nature of the market and city over the course of two days, I realized that the spirit was much like at home, holiday joy and excitement, but there was a deeper sense of tradition and value to it and it lacked the rushed material feeling of Christmas at home. At the time I thought perhaps I was imagining it.

I spent the two weeks in between that trip and my return to the States studying and absorbed in editing and writing several papers while sequestered in my dorm or the library. I arrived at JFK in the late evening of December 15th, and toward the end of our trip home I began to notice several blow-up Santa Clauses on the lawns. They were the first ones I'd seen all season, and I was somewhat shaken. Then I saw the inflatable snowmen and copious amounts of lights, beyond what many people would consider tasteful, and I could not get over it. I should clarify that of course what people put up is their own business and I certainly have no right to be overly critical; what I say here is just one perspective. Personally I find such displays to be the epitome of the commercialization of the holiday that occurs in this country. I think you could use this example as one instance of significant culture shock. This attitude is not blatantly displayed in Europe, although, yes, I admit the Christmas cards and wrapping paper went on display around the "normal" time.

It was only after remembering the deep feeling of tradition and religious connection that I felt in Europe that I realized I need to find my own middle ground. I was not more religious as a result of that weekend, but I wanted to have a greater awareness of what Christmas means for me in the midst of the holiday craze. This entire season is about the moments of tradition in my life. Coming home this year, from three thousand miles away as opposed to three hours by car, is much bigger and more meaningful than ever before. I realize how much the little things define my holiday spirit, whether it is wading through knee-high snow with my mom to look for our tree, or taking the extra time to pick up the gift that someone secretly wants so I can see his or face light up when opening it. Yes, by definition the holiday is to celebrate the birth of Christ, and I do not dispute that, but for me it is not what makes this season or this holiday so special.

I no longer admire the massive displays of lights as I used to; now when I see a subtle job I remember it because it is cheerful without looking cheap. What is Christmas? Well, it varies for each individual, and how one celebrates it is deeply personal. I am celebrating a great number of things this year and am thankful that my experience abroad and in Germany has given me a clearer mindset as I go about my Christmas season. I cannot deny my materialistic shopping sense or obsession with pretty wrapping paper, but I like to focus more on what grounds me to this time of year as I go about my limited number of days at home. I love making creative gift tags and opening the box of tree ornaments that seems to chronicle large parts of my life. I am grateful for the hominess of the General Store with the Christmas music in the background, being able to visit with family and friends at the holiday parties, and the sense of community I feel when I'm home. People asked me before I left if I was coming home for Christmas. For me it was never a question. At this point in time, my life is still here, the traditions have been made, and I am thankful to be home. My heartfelt wishes for a happy healthy holiday season!

— Tarsi Dunlop

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Lou

Outside of the circus, Lou Boguess was the strangest looking human being I have ever seen. Upon viewing him for the first time, even the most well-mannered individuals were reduced to open-mouthed staring. Not that his appearance was offensive. He actually attracted children, who, like adults, were more spellbound than repelled. The compelling issue was an inability to categorize him because his physical features consisted of so many incongruous racial elements. There were nuances of Caucasoid, Negroid, Mongoloid, Pacific Islander, Native American, and even Cro-Magnon, any one of which could emerge, depending on lighting and viewing angle.

Lou was of medium height but gave the impression of being uncommonly tall. Thin but big-boned, he projected an image of gawky angularity: stooped posture with disproportionately long arms and large-knuckled hands which hung to his knees. Add to this picture platinum blond hair that was tightly curled, skin of tawny bronze, and a horse face with sloping forehead, long, narrow nose which flared into disproportionately large nostrils, and full lips stretched over prominent teeth. And, most striking, the eyes. Eyes that sloped but were the color of surreal Caribbean green. And translucent, so that you weren't sure if you were looking at them or through them. Cat eyes.

Most disarming, however, was his intellect. One would expect that Lou's primitive looking skull would house a dissipated, vestigial brain. But when he spoke, this image changed instantly. He was sharp as a tack, with a commanding, resonant voice that could turn a bystander's head. And he knew how to use his combination of charisma and physical oddity to his advantage. When he locked those imposing eyes on you, he had your full attention. The man could hypnotize a cobra. But his most impressive talent was in the realm of shoplifting, which he had honed to a fine art. Lou Boguess was a master thief.

I got to know Lou when I was a kid. My family's corner grocery offered free delivery, and I often rode shotgun on our panel truck, so I had frequent occasion to visit his tarpaper shack at the edge of town. The shack was approached by a dirt road littered with trash from a nearby garbage dump. A flock of scrawny chickens scratched and pecked at the barren earth. To the sides of the road sat a variety of rusting vehicles, including a gutted school bus, which rested on cement blocks and functioned as a dormitory for the children who couldn't squeeze into the house.

It was my job to carry the groceries into the kitchen, which consisted of a dry sink, a rickety sawhorse table, and a variety of wooden boxes that served as chairs. Despite the lack of indoor plumbing, the shack's interior, supervised by Lou's wife, was clean and orderly. Water was obtained through an outdoor hand pump, and on the sweltering days of midsummer I looked forward to dousing my head and swigging the sweetest well water I have ever tasted. But the spout was located only a few paces away from their outhouse, and when the wind came from that direction I couldn't get anywhere near it.

Lou and his wife looked exactly alike, leading to talk around town that they were related, probably cousins or maybe even siblings, and the kids were spitting images of their parents. Mrs. Boguess was a quiet woman who never spoke, but as I unboxed the groceries onto her sawhorse table she managed to direct me with a stone-faced nod that somehow came across as pleasant communication. In my Cowboys-and-Indians world, she was a squaw to Lou's Geronimo. I knew Lou worked in the local coal mine, but each time I stepped into their kitchen I took a furtive look around for evidence of a headdress or tomahawk. Maybe he and his wife really were brother and sister. Yeah, that was it, I told myself. Probably the rest of their tribe was wiped out by the Western Pennsylvania militia and they were cohabiting in order to reproduce their lineage. >

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Even though it was less profitable, we preferred to deliver Lou's groceries by trucking them out to his ramshackle compound rather than waiting on him in person. The problem was that every time he visited our store he managed to steal something, and even though we knew what he was up to, he was so slick that we couldn't see or prove it.

The alarm sounded instantly the moment he passed through the door.

"*Gonif* !" we whispered to each other in Yiddish. "*Thief* !"

I'm certain Lou knew we were watching him, but he enjoyed the game. And, to my surprise, so did my father. Normally when Dad suspected someone of pilfering he was on them like a hawk. Like the kid who had a reputation for sticky fingers. "Play 'patty cake,' Harry," Dad ordered him, and the moment Harry stopped clapping Dad made him come up to the counter and empty his pockets.

But with Lou it was different. Perhaps he reasoned that Lou was a good customer who paid his bills on time, and whatever was lost to petty thievery was more than made up for in overall profits. At any rate, when Lou was in the store the atmosphere wasn't adversarial. It was more like spirited competition.

Take for example the fateful day when Lou stopped in for a pack of Camels. It was late afternoon on a sweltering Friday in August, and the store was bursting with summer vegetables. An exhaust fan hummed above the lacquered green screen door, laboring against the accumulated heat of a brisk day of business. On counter number one sat a pyramid of locally grown tomatoes, an impulse item that sold briskly and was replenished several times daily.

Lou, covered in coal dust, was on his way home from a day of backbreaking work in the McDonald mine. As he handed over his payment for the cigarettes his forehead furrowed, followed by a subtle narrowing of eyes and tightened mouth. Even I recognized this as a challenge. I watched as my father raised his eyebrows and pawed out a soft jab.

"Everything okay, Lou?" he inquired slyly. My pulse quickened. The game was on.

"Yeah, Victor," Lou mused, "everything's okay now. But something happened today," he continued. "Something that the average man don't experience in a lifetime." He paused for effect, waiting for my father to respond.

"Really, Lou," prompted my dad. "What was that?"

"Well, Victor, you might not want to believe this, but a gen-u-ine miracle happened today. Down in the coal mine."

My father hooked his thumbs in the shoulder straps of his starched white apron, nodding soberly. "Is that a fact?"

"Yes it is, Victor. That's a fact, all right. Sure as shootin'."

"A miracle. In the coal mine," Dad repeated.

Lou pointed his finger. "Now I can see you're doubtin' me, Victor, but you just listen. Lemme tell ya."

He shifted his weight and rubbed his hands, warming to the task.

"I was workin' real deep today, ya see. Took the elevator all the way down to the bottom level. And you know, after you been in the minin' business as long as I have, you start to get a sixth sense about things. You know what I mean … when there's danger, and like that. But what I was feelin' today was somethin' else. I could tell that this was gonna be a special day, that there was this great big vein of coal waitin' on me. I'm tellin' you, Victor, I could *smell* it. I could just smell this rich vein o' black coal waitin' to be harvested, so I started out in that direction. I didn't reach it right away, but somethin' kept pullin' me along, way down them dark passages where you couldn't see nothin' at all if you didn't have your light on." He tapped the area on his coal-blackened forehead where he wore his miner's light. Noting that he had my father's attention, he went on.

"So after gettin' way back in there, sure enough I find this real big vein o' coal. Just the richest vein I ever seen. And you know what, Victor, I stopped right there and I gave thanks to God"—he turned his eyes heavenward—"because money's been tight, you know, and this was surely a gift … So I went ahead and said my prayer, and then I got to workin' and I'm telling

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you I pick-axed so much coal outta there I run outta room in my loader. I mean one o' them *big* loaders. Couldn't hardly move it on the rails. Anyway, I was workin' hard, and sweatin' real heavy …."

He paused for effect. "And then it happened."

Now my father was hooked, and so was I. A smug shadow crossed Lou's features.

"Victor, my light went out! The battery just failed, just like that. Dimmed for a minute, and then it was gone before I even had a chance to get outta there." He drew a deep breath. "Well, I don't have to tell you, brother, I was *scared*! Scared to *death*! Because I called out for help and nobody answered. Couldn't hear me, I guess. I was too far back in, and I thought for sure I was gonna die right there in that mine. The weekend was comin' and they were gonna close up the place real tight so no kids could get in, an' I knew there was them big ol' mine rats in there — some o' them big as *dogs*, ya know, and I could just see myself dyin' down in there in that coal mine, bein' eaten alive by them big ol' rats with them sharp teeth …" He shuddered at the thought. "Big as *dogs*, I'm tellin' ya!"

Again he paused, summoning the courage to continue.

"So I'll tell you what I did, Victor. I don't mind tellin' ya, I started to pray again, only this time I fell right down onto my knees, and let me tell you man, I *prayed*. I prayed harder than I ever prayed in my life." Suddenly his tone hushed. The translucent eyes glistened.

"And then is when the miracle happened …. Victor, as God is my witness, I saw a light. Way down there in the bottom of the mine where there wasn't no light at all. Just a little pinpoint at first, comin' right out of the wall. But pretty soon it started to get brighter. And bigger."

Now Lou's voice rose to a boom, eyes widening, hands spreading, the drama — for me, at least — waxing nearly unbearable.

"And then it got so bright I could barely look at it. And you know what, Victor? Right out of the middle of that light stepped Jesus. *Jesus*, I tell ya! Just as big as life. And he was smilin' at me. Just the most beautiful smile you ever saw. And then he started walkin' toward me, and he got right in front of me. And then, Victor, he put out his hand. Put it right there in front of my face. And you know what he said, Victor?"

My breathing stopped as Lou's voice dropped to a compelling whisper.

"He said, 'Louis, do not be afraid'."

While telling the story Lou put out his hand just as Jesus had done. He put it right in front of my father's face. And he held it there while he used his other hand to snatch a choice tomato from the top of the pyramid display and deftly slip it into the pocket of his baggy pants.

Because I was watching from an angle, I saw him do it. And I was about to blurt out, "Hey, Dad, Lou stole a tomato!" But just then I caught my father's eye, and ever so subtly he winked at me. I got the message. He had seen it, but out of appreciation for the performance he was going to let it go.

"Well, Lou, that was quite an experience," my father said evenly. "So you got out of the mine all right, after all."

For a brief moment, Lou faltered. I think he knew Dad was onto him. "Yeah," he mumbled, shaking his head. "I got out, thank the Lord ... A miracle, a miracle." Then, in an instant, he gathered himself and turned to leave.

"Well, I'll see you, Victor. God bless you, now."

My father managed to maintain a somber expression. "Same to you, Lou," he nodded.

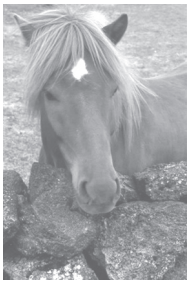
As Lou walked out he slowed briefly, leading me to think he was going to turn around and confess. But his hesitation was only to tap one of the Camels out of his new pack, light it with an expert flick of his Zippo, and take a deep, satisfying drag. Resuming his confident stride, he blew a dense stream of smoke through his nose, leaving a cloud as if to cover his trail. I watched until he exited and the screen door slammed shut behind him.

Then I turned to look at my father.

He was smiling.

Epilogue: Years after I left the tiny village of Oakdale and our family's corner grocery, I discovered that Lou Boguess was actually well-read and something of an intellectual. Perhaps in a different persona he would have climbed to a much higher socioeconomic rung. But on the "unforgettable" scale he ranks at the top. Like my father, when I think of Lou I never fail to smile.

— David Shifrin



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What's in a Tree?

If you walk on country roads in Monterey on a winter afternoon, there is not much going on! Many of the weekend and summer homes along the shores of Lake Garfield appear dark and empty inside. The lake is frozen over so there is very little wildlife to see as well. So, to seek adventure, and for a change of scenery, I elect to explore a deserted old logging road. Rising up along the way is a hulk of a hollow tree in a woodland that has not been logged for the better part of a hundred years or more. A feeling that I have walked back in time to discover a natural wonder comes over me, along with the mystique of what fur bearing animals might be holed up inside.

A tree becomes hollow as a result of an outside injury which if not repaired fails to stop further fungus decay. Insects eat out what is deteriorating with further wood removal, while growth continues on the outer trunk. An early wound on the base of a young tree can widen into an opening with age until it can be identified as a basal scar tree, the hallmark of a den tree, with a door for wildlife to enter and take shelter from the elements.

Among those taking refuge are squirrels, chipmunks, possums, raccoons, and, upon a rare occurrence, even a black bear. The heartbeat of hibernating bears may slow down to five or six per minute, along with a drop in their metabolism. But all during the winter not a second is wasted for the pregnant sows, which will give birth to cubs during the darkness of their retreat, well before the dawn of another spring.

A new nesting season will bring birds such as pileated woodpeckers, which peck out their own hollows in the punkish limbs to raise their young. Wood ducks and an owl or two may move into a hollow while nobody else is home. But the most treasured tenant of all is the honeybee. Today bee trees are very few and far between, because the honeybee population has been decimated for decades by invasive mites and recently by mold poisoning. Fifty years ago, honey hunters could harvest sixty to a hundred pounds from a single tree. It was located by baiting a small section of honeycomb, which bees could scent for up to three miles; when they found it they would head back in a "beeline" to their hive, followed by the hunter with a compass and a keen eye.

As we approach midwinter, the sun dips down below the horizon for the darkest days of our annual cycle. The end of January will bring the celestial observation of what is called a "full cold moon." From there we can look forward to a gradual brightening of the solar season, which leads me to wish you a happy new year ... Let the celebrations begin!

— George Emmons

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Award-winning Ray Delivers Stirring Address

Janisse Ray, author of the American Book Award winner *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, delivered a stirring, meaningful address to the public on December 2nd at the monthly South Berkshire Quaker Meeting in Great Barrington. Approximately twenty citizens from around Berkshire County arrived to hear the celebrated author speak on sustainability and the environment. The presentation, "Nature, Community, and the Life We Dream," was wide-ranging and included a lively discussion period with the audience. Monterey residents Shirley and Storrs Olds coordinated the talk. Audience members included students from Monument Mountain High School, members of the Quaker Meeting, and the general public.

Ray grew up in Baxley, Georgia. Her books tell her life story, chronicling her quest to find sustainability and to preserve the forests and swamplands of the South. Upon completing graduate school, she returned home, hoping to return to her roots and stop the "fragmentation" she felt was toppling her hopes of living an environmentally conscious and whole lifestyle. She details this journey in *Wild Card Quilt: Taking a Chance on Home* and *Pinhook: Finding Wholeness in a Fragmented Land*.

The talk began with the eloquent yet sad set of poems titled, "I Know Where the Earth is Bleeding." They focused on endangered species and problems related to coal mining. Here Ray stressed the problems of capitalism, reminding the audience, "Our government system is not capitalism … it is democracy." She emphasized that our economic system is corrupt and outlined other dire consequences caused by competition. The solution to this problem, Ray said, is to be cooperative and respectful, and not abuse the earth to obtain wealth. She pointed out that the election of responsible leaders is an integral component of the solution, also advocating for the impeachment of George W. Bush and other "incompetent" rulers.

The beauty of the wilderness was the next focal point of the presentation. Intertwining vivid, moving descriptions of native wildlife and landscapes with her ever-powerful message, Ray effectively presented the topic, convincing the spellbound yet focused audience of the importance of complete preservation and natural harmony.

The final theme, and according to Ray, the most important, was community. From Ray's point of view, fragmentation causes strife, pollution, and other fundamental problems. To achieve wholeness and sustainability, she believes a strong sense of community and family is essential. For example, we should discourage the culture of going away from home in adult life. "Something is wrong in a culture that believes you must leave home to be successful," she said. Supporting local farmers and businesses is an important thing we can do to fight both global warming and fragmentation, she said, encouraging all to buy as locally as possible as a practical solution. However, Ray emphasized that there is a fine line between community and isolation. She said, that while it is important to keep our culture local, that does not mean we should protect or separate ourselves from the remainder of humankind. Fundamentalist religion is a problem she said, because it discourages imagination and ingenuity, instead placing limits on our capabilities.

The discussion period featured questions by listeners and a heated discussion on such topics as the benefits of veganism. Here, the Monument Mountain students presented their project, which aims to grow and produce food for the high school on campus within the timeframe of two years. The goal of their project is to increase environmental awareness and foster sustainability at the high school. Ray expressed great enthusiasm at the idea, encouraging the students to further explore those possibilities.

Upon the conclusion of the talk, the audience heartily applauded Janisse Ray's informative and provocative presentation. Ray encouraged all present to apply any insights gained into their daily lives. The enthusiasm of the citizens for Janisse Ray's ideas is a small, symbolic example of the environmental awareness that is sweeping Berkshire County and the United States as a whole. We have heard the message. Now, it is time to integrate it into our actions.

— Jonah Carlson

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Home to Holly Springs, Jan Karon
T Is for Trespass, Sue Grafton
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Rumpole Misbehaves, John Mortimer
People of the Book, Geraldine Brooks
The Seventh Well, Fred Wander

Nonfiction

Letters of Noel Coward
Food: The History of Taste: Paul Freedman

Contributors

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Alison Collins
George Emmons

Good Dog, Stay, Anna Quindlen
Never Give Up, Tedy Bruschi
Moving the Chains, Tom Brady and the Pursuit of Everything, Charles Pierce
I Am America and So Can You, Stephen Colbert
Wreck of the Medusa, Jonathan Miles
Don't Bet against Me, Deeana Favre
Bringing Nature Home, Douglas Tallamy

Children's

Daring Book for Girls, Andrea Buchanan
Peter and the Secret of Rundoon, Dave Barry
Seeing Stone, Holly Black
The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, Sherman Alexie
The Puzzling World of Winston Breen, Eric Berlin

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Leonard Weber to Speak at January 9th Potluck

At the December community potluck dinner, Eric Martin, along with Bottom of the Bucket bandmate Stephen Enoch, gave a wonderful presentation involving different styles of violin and viola playing, from classical to fiddle, accompanied by guitar and foot percussion, along with a little history of how each style evolved. We are very grateful to them for the program.

The next potluck will be January 9, 2008, wth our own Leonard Webber speaking on a subject near and dear to his heart, achieving healthy longevity, "The First Hundred Years are the Hardest," based on the amazing discoveries by the Nobel Prize-winning scientist Otto Warburg.

The Monterey Community Potluck Dinner will be held at 6 p.m., January 9th, in the Fellowship Hall of the Monterey Meetinghouse. All are welcome. Please bring a dish to share with a serving utensil and a place setting and plate for yourself.

— Kyle Pierce

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Sprout Film Festival Comes to Triplex in February

The Sprout Film Festival Tour makes its first stop of 2008 on February 2nd at noon at the Triplex Cinema in Great Barrington. Hosted by Community Access to the Arts, this event features short films by and about people with developmental disabilities. Tickets are $10 for adults. Children under 18 are admitted free. Community Access to the Arts (CATA) is a local non-profit organization that nurtures and celebrates the creativity of people with disabilities through shared experiences in the visual and performing arts.

The Sprout Film Festival is based in New York City and houses a library of approximately 60 films made by and about people with developmental disabilities. John Whalan of Black Ice Entertainment, event sponsor and Vice President of the Board of Directors of CATA, said, "Sprout's traveling film festival showcases work by comedians. writers, documentary filmmakers, and fine actors who happen to have developmental disabilities. The films we'll be featuring prove that entertainment, comedy, and compelling storytelling are the universal languages for audiences. If you come for no other reason, come to be entertained."

By presenting films of artistry and intellect, insight and humor, the festival hopes to offer accurate, nuanced portrayals of people with developmental disabilities and invite the media and the general public to consider this population from a new and engaging perspective. Anthony di Salvo, founder of the Sprout Film Festival, will be on hand to introduce the films.

CATA, celebrating its 15th year offering arts programs to people with disabilities, is continually seeking enjoyable and enlightening ways to help break down stereotypes and promote greater acceptance of differences and awareness of similarities. Cosponsors of the event include the Triplex Cinema and other CATA board members including Catherine and Matt Mandel and Lee Ann and Mark Pettus.

Approximately eight to ten short films will be shown in 90 minutes — some touching portraits of memorable people, some comedic shorts, and some entertaining narrative stories. Following the screening, the audience is invited to CATA's new studio at 70 Railroad Street for refreshments. Viewers can learn more about Sprout at www.gosprout.org. For information on CATA, visit www.communityaccesstothearts.org. For tickets, call The Triplex at 528-8885 or visit www.thetriplex.com.

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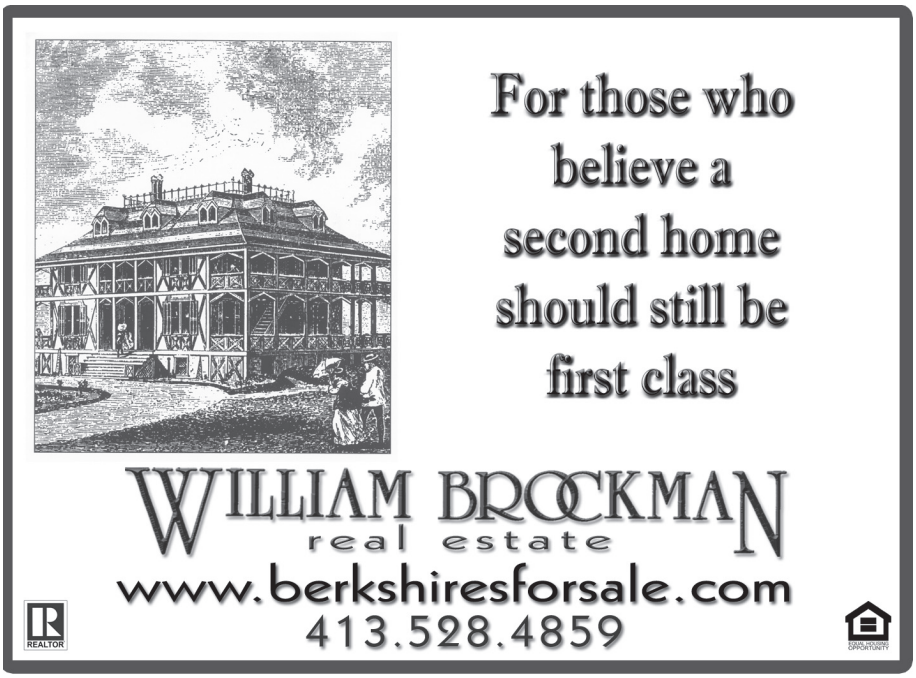

The Observer
November 26 – December 25

High temp. (11/26)	55°
Low temp. (12/6)	6°
Avg. high temp.	32.7°
Avg. low temp.	18.5°
Avg. temp.	25.6°
Total precipitation (rain and melted snow)	5.98 in.
Snowfall	27.5 in.

Precipitation occurred on 8 days.

Call for Berkshire Theatre Festival History Stories

In preparation for Berkshire Theatre Festival's 2008 80th season celebration, the theatre invites patrons, alumni, and friends to share their stories and memories of BTF's past. Did you get your start performing at the Unicorn Theatre? Fall in love with your future spouse during a spirited intermission debate? Catch one of your favorite actors performing karaoke at Michaels after hours? BTF looks forward to hearing anything you would like to share.

Photographs will also be gratefully accepted. Please include a brief caption describing the people featured in the photo and the action taking place. All the stories and photographs will become part of the theatre's permanent archives, and selected excerpts will be featured on the theatre's website and in the season program.

Submit all material by April 15th. Email your story or photograph and contact information to Director of Communications Gina Hyams at pr@berkshiretheatre.org or send them to Berkshire Theatre Festival, Attn: Gina Hyams, PO Box 797, Stockbridge, MA 01262.

BTF's Main Stage (404 seats)was originally designed and built by Stanford White as the Stockbridge Casino in 1888. The mission of BTF's second stage, the intimate Unicorn Theatre (122 seats), is to provide a home for emerging artists and new theatrical ideas. BTF's education program, BTF PLAYS!, reaches over 9,500 children annually through school residencies, touring performances, and summer performance training and writing programs.

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George Emmons, p. 16;

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